SAINT PAUL BICYCLE COALITION

Mayor Christopher Coleman
(and the Saint Paul City Council)
390 City Hall
15 West Kellogg Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55102

February 28, 2013

Dear Mayor Coleman and The Saint Paul City Council,

After a discussion at its last meeting on February 12th, The Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition is disappointed with the final design of the Hamline Avenue Bridge that traverses Ayd Mill Road and the Canadian Pacific Railway. We are grateful that the city saw fit to include bicycle lanes but we are disappointed that they don't really connect to anything. It was our hope that the city would consider reducing Hamline Avenue from 4 lanes to 3 lanes between Summit Avenue (where the 4-lane section begins) and University Avenue (where it ends). This would enable striping that entire portion of Hamline Avenue with bike lanes, something that is needed in this area of the city.

Hamline has been talked about as a possible north-south bike route for a long time. This is primarily because, north of University Avenue, it narrows to 2 lanes where it has low volumes of slow moving motor vehicles, and a bike-ped bridge that can take riders across the BNSF railroad tracks and over to Energy Park Drive. The only part of Hamline that is unfriendly to cyclists and pedestrians is the 4-lane stretch from Summit Avenue to University Avenue. According to page 43 of the Transportation Chapter of the city's Comprehensive Plan, this stretch of Hamline has about 15,100 vehicles-per-day. This is more than it had prior to Randy Kelly opening up the south end of Ayd Mill Road but well within the federal guidelines of 20,000 vehicles-per-day for doing a 4-lane to 3-lane conversion. This stretch passes through Concordia University, splitting its campus in two and poses a hazard to the high volumes of students and staff who have to walk across it.

Hamline has also been talked about as a possible north-south bike route because, to the west, there is currently no safe, well-lit, north-south cycling route that crosses CP rail, Ayd Mill Road and Interstate 94 until you get to Prior Avenue, 1.3 miles away.

More disappointing is that the unwillingness to do a 4-lane to 3-lane conversion of Hamline is typical of Public Works and the City's refusal to do conversions on other, even more important arterial streets in order to accommodate bicycles. To connect the Caesar Chavez bike lanes with downtown, Public Works refused to convert one block of Wabasha from 5 lanes to 4 lanes between Plato and E. Fillmore even though it has just 12,100 vehicles per day. Instead they insist on acquiring more land to widen it to 6 lanes! Same thing on Robert Street between Caesar Chavez and downtown—one of the most

dangerous places to ride a bicycle in the entire city of Saint Paul. In doing this they are cutting off an entire section of the city that includes the Wellstone Center, a bike lane on Caesar Chavez, at least two Nice Ride stations and some popular stores and restaurants. It's the same thing with the 3rd Street/Kellogg Avenue Bridge to the East Side, which carries just 10,350 vehicles per day and is one of the only, well-lit commuter routes to the East Side of the city.

If Saint Paul really wants to become bike-friendly, it is going to have to show a willingness to give up a traffic lane here and there in the city. This was the advice of the League of American Cyclists when they evaluated our "Bicycle Friendly City" application. The same arterial streets that Public Works refuses to give up lanes on are often the only routes over railroads or freeways. Pedestrians and bicyclists also need to cross these obstacles and need to be given equal access. You say you support "Complete streets" but, every time there's a user conflict on a critical arterial roadway, you decide in favor of cars and against bikes. If you continue to design your city and downtown around automobile capacity and parking, it will remain an urban dead-zone. We urge you to get outside engineering opinions on Hamline and some of these other arterial streets, perhaps from engineers or firms with experience in bike/ped engineering and non-car-oriented city planning.

Thank you for your consideration.

Andy Singer, Co-Chair
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